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ABSTRACT

An analysis and comparison of two frames, "conventioning" and "game," as experienced by convention goers is presented to provide a partial explanation of convention behavior and stress response. Many of the concepts discussed come directly from books by Erving Goffman. Frames are principles of organization that govern events, at least social ones, and our subjective involvement in them. Frames are subject to reworking, a shifting of one frame to another, in two ways, "keying" and "fabrication." A description is presented of the untransformed conventioning frame which gives to the conventioners what is most often considered by them to be an authentic and appropriate reality. The game frame is discussed with reference to transformation through keying. Several kinds of focused convention situations are analyzed to demonstrate the differences between keying to a game frame or to a conventioning frame. Problematic frame transformations, self and the two frames, and frames and historical explanations of dramaturgy are discussed.
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OPPORTUNITIES, TRAPS AND SANCTUARIES:

A FRAME ANALYSIS OF LEARNED SOCIETIES

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Introduction

A most significant event of American Learned Societies is the annual convention. Usually located in one or several downtown hotels in prominent, convenient or attractive cities, conventions bring together scholars who interact with each other for a few days or a week.

Viewed in standard functional terms, these conventions handle a variety of discipline, organization and member needs. From the perspective of the discipline, the meetings provide occasions for expressing the solidarity, integrity, diverseness and breadth of the field. New directions are often indicated, and important recent information is rapidly and widely communicated via the membership to discipline outposts scattered throughout the United States and abroad.

For the organization, it is a time of renewal and confirmation; a time for justifying the existence and behavior of the central office, the occasion for changing elected officials, the moment for implementing often ambitious plans for a "worthwhile" convention, and an opportunity to receive a mandate to continue and begin new programs and discipline efforts.

For individuals, the meetings have several meanings, two of which are particularly significant. The first involves the importance of individual participation in the convention back at the member's home organization. The second is the significance of participating in the meetings for persons experiencing them on site.

The convention is an important vehicle for giving rewards to discipline members. These rewards can be translated into prestige and legitimacy at the member's own university or research organization. Rewards provide external evidence of the national prominence of an individual in much the same way that articles in journals do (although oral presentations carry less weight than do printed materials). Persons are rewarded for papers accepted and delivered, panel participations, elections to national society office, appointment to association committees, awards given for various kinds of achievement, and symposia organized around one's book or work. Even more, attendance at the conventions conveys cosmopolitanism and indicates to those back home an active attempt to keep up with the field. It is, then, of considerable value for members to participate in national society meetings. And the more participation, the more rewards there may be at the place of employment.

However, there are many limitations on how much reward will be given for this kind of activity. Also, the rewards are highly differential in importance, e.g., while paper giving is given more status than is mere attendance, it is worth less than election to national office. Some national associations are not viewed as having very much scholarly character and thus cannot bestow rewards that are very convincing to others on the home campus. Some schools do not value scholarly participation in national learned societies as important activities for their faculties.

Nevertheless, in those learned societies with appropriate credentials, the convention has much to offer any participant from any organization that places value on research and publications. It is thus worthwhile for persons to participate, and the participation may have effects on a person's career.

The other meaning for the individual member is found in the quality of his or her encounters at the convention. Individual conventioner behavior provides a basis for meaningful, rewarding, and possibly disturbing interactions with other members. In the convention a considerable amount of face-to-face interaction takes place and is much encouraged. The annual meetings are physically and programmatically arranged so that it is possible for small and large groups to assemble and to have individuals in the groups interact.

These meetings are often interesting, informative and enjoyable for association members. There is a reunion quality to many of the encounters. Friends and acquaintances, widely dispersed by geography, are here gathered in one place and opportunities for renewing old ties occur. At the same time the conventions are also seen as problematic and ambiguous. Members are uneasy about them. The conventions appear shapeless and diffuse to some conventions. For many there seems to be an endless proliferation of papers given, gossip, speeches, luncheons, hospitality suites and expensive evening meals. There is also a kind of suspicion that attends the gathering of members for the celebration of the discipline and the showering of rewards and recognitions upon the successful high achievers. One of the most consistent beliefs is that an oligarchy, unfairly selected and maintained, runs the organization and effectively prevents other, perhaps more deserving persons with different allegiances and backgrounds, from sufficient and just participation in decision making with regard to association governance, panel content, and member selection. Over the years, records of association minutes indicate factional power struggles involving paradigm dominance, ideological and methodological differences, and regional and school influences upon the association (Bloland and Bloland, 1974, chs. 4, 5, 6).

For many, a feeling of uneasiness pervades. Persons come away from conventions feeling overly exposed, frustrated and irritated. They say such

things as, "Too much noise! Too many people!," "I'm just glad to get out of that rat race", "I didn't really get to talk to the people I wanted to talk to", "I spent as little time as possible at the convention, but I really like San Francisco." Conventioners may thus have a strong sense after the convention that things didn't work out the way they should have, that they have been very publicly displayed under less than optimal conditions, and that, in interactions in the convention, the individual member did not present himself or herself in the most favorable light.

Evidences of ambiguity, uneasiness, frustration and general suspicion are viewed in this paper as manifestations of a considerable amount of psychic stress which participants may experience at conventions. It is argued here that much of that stress is generated by the conventioner's having to confront two very different "realities" in the rounds of everyday convention life. These realities or strips of experience are cued by "frames" which indicate for each reality what the rules for ordering experience are (Goffman, 10-11). Strain occurs primarily because the frames are highly conflicting and incompatible, shifting back and forth, sometimes very quickly and often unpredictably, and because frame shifts are usually neither clear nor clean.

This paper seeks to present, analyze and compare the two frames, "conventioning" and "game", as experienced by convention goers, thus providing a partial explanation for a significant aspect of convention behavior and stress response. It is important to note that annual meetings have a great deal in common with each other in terms of the physical settings in which they are presented, the conflicts and ambiguities that

are generated during their rather brief yearly appearances, and the behavior and interpretations of reality that are exhibited. The intention is to draw from, and appeal to, mutual knowledge of author and reader, and by focusing on the everyday life of the convention, to see the meaning of the interaction more clearly.¹

Framing the Annual Meeting

Many of the major concepts in this paper come directly from Erving Goffman's work, primarily from Frame Analysis, but to some extent also from his Encounters and Behavior in Public Places. Goffman's general point of departure has emphasized a dramaturgical approach to the study of face-to-face interaction in routine activities in everyday life. His view, from his early work, is that when people interact, each person attempts to manage the impressions that others will have of him or her. A "show" is presented by each person to others. Goffman thus wrote in his first book, "I shall consider the way in which the

¹ This paper is an artifact resulting from a long term, continuing interest in and study of higher education associations, of which American learned societies are one type, and the convention a significant occasion in the association's annual round of activities and events. Previous work by the author is drawn upon in this paper. This includes material gathered in connection with the writing of "National Associations and the Shaping of Federal Higher Education Policy," Sociology of Education, Vol. 41, #2 (Spring, 1968), 156-77, Higher Education in a Decentralized Education System (Berkeley: Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, 1969), American Learned Societies in Transition (with Sue M. Bloland) (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974).

Most of the empirical basis for analysis derives from my own convention watching and my convention member participation for a period of more than a decade. The types of learned societies conventions attended have ranged across the social sciences, humanities, physical sciences and education, almost all of them national in scope. Colleagues, friends and strangers have contributed rich anecdotal material which has been very helpful in the analysis of experience in these annual meetings.

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individual...presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impressions they form of him and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them (Goffman, 1959, p. xi).

Goffman's emphasis upon the social construction of reality, the emergent, processual and voluntaristic character of interaction, his general concern with the concept of self, his interest in deference, demeanor and ritual, and his lack of emphasis upon the central importance of historical conditions in influencing situations, all place him broadly in the area of symbolic interactionist thought. Although his dramaturgical model is a departure from the direction of his mentors, he is nevertheless identified with the Chicago group who did much to develop symbolic interactionism during the 1940s and 1950s, e.g., Herbert Blumer, Everett C. Hughes, Anselm Strauss. Further, his intellectual orientation owes much (or ties him) to the ideas of George Herbert Mead, John Dewey, Charles Cooley, Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel and Alfred Schütz. More immediately, Goffman acknowledges his debt to William James for his notions concerning social reality (Frame Analysis, 2-3) and to Gregory Bateson for proposing in other contexts the concepts of "frame" and "key" which Goffman develops and elaborates in Frame Analysis (p. 40-41).

Goffman's particular emphasis is upon structures underlying "definitions of the situation." This means that the two basic frames, "conventioneering" and "game", are not viewed as being "created" by the actors, nor as orders arising out of negotiations among those participating in an encounter. Rather, as Goffman writes, "Defining situations as real certainly has conse-

quences, but these may contribute very marginally to the events in progress... Presumably, a 'definition of the situation' is almost always to be found, but those who are in the situation ordinarily did not create this definition, even though their society can be said to do so; ordinarily, all they do is to assess correctly what the situation ought to be for them and then act accordingly" (Goffman, 1974, 1-2).

Frames underly "definitions of the situation" and inform persons what the reality of the situation is. In Goffman's perspective, frames tend to be discovered and/or invoked through "keying" and "fabrication." This perspective is important in this study for it illuminates the possibility of highly discontinuous forms of everyday convention life organized in rather conflicting ways. Gonos makes this point about Goffman's presentation generally: "his work suggests that the apparent continuity of everyday life masks a real discontinuity, the coexistence of forms of daily life showing dramatic differences in principle. Their boundaries mark not just changes in taste or style, in how naked beings are clothed, but potentially significant differences in the character and quality of everyday life" (Gonos, 858).

Frames and Convention Frames

Goffman's most explicit statement referring to frames identifies them as "principles of organization which govern events - at least social ones - and our subjective involvement in them" (Goffman, 1974, 10-11). Frame analysis is applied to understanding how experience is organized into a "strip of activity" (Goffman, 1974, 10)². Reality consists of a series of not very closely connected frames which organize an individual's experience within them. Goffman indicates two broad primary frameworks, natural and social, which provide instruction on how to interpret situations. Natural frameworks organize events as "unguided, unanimated, purely physical occurrences" (Goffman, 1974, 22). Social frameworks give "background understanding for events that incorporate the will, aim and controlling efforts..." (Goffman, 1974, 22) of human beings. A social framework involves "guided doings" (Goffman, 1974, 23). These primary frameworks are significant because they let individuals, "locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences" (Goffman, 1974, 21). The social framework is viewed by Goffman as less stable than the natural framework and thus much more open to manipulation, deception, collapse and exposure.

Conventions clearly exist in social frameworks about which enough is known to give the participants considerable range of background information, at least on the surface, so that they have, to a greater or lesser degree, an image of "What it is that is going on here." (Of course, in the Goffman world, what looks on the surface like an ordinary everyday activity is laden with pitfalls and unexpected landmines.)

²

"The term 'strip' will be used to refer to any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity, including here sequences of happenings, real or fictive, as seen from the perspective of those subjectively involved in sustaining an interest in them" (Goffman, 1974, 10).

Keying and Fabrication

Frames are subject to reworking, a shifting from one frame to another, in two ways, keying and fabrication.

Keying involves, "the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else" (Goffman, 1974, 43-44). An example of keying used by Goffman involves Gregory Bateson's observations of otters at Fleishacker zoo in San Francisco (Goffman, 1974, 40-43). The otters seemed to be fighting. However, upon more closely observing them, Bateson concluded that they were playing. For Bateson the primary activity of fighting was transformed or in Goffman's terms "keyed" into play, an activity which looked very much like fighting, but which had quite a different meaning to the participants and to those observing them. Thus, although changes that take place with regard to the actual activity may be very slight, they utterly change what it is that a participant would say was happening. "Keying, then...performs a crucial role in determining what it is we think is really going on" (Goffman, 1974, 45). Goffman cites "make-believe, contests, ceremonies, technical doings and re-groundings" (Goffman, 1974, 48) as basic keys used in the society, but allows for the possibility that there may be many more in addition to these five.

Fabrication refers to "the intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one or more others will be induced to have a false belief about what it is that is going on. A nefarious design is involved, a plot or treacherous plan leading - when realized - to a falsification of some part of the world" (Goffman, 1974, 83).

Thus, keying involves everyone being aware of the transformation of the change in meaning of the activity, and fabrication means that some are aware

of the transformation and try to prevent other, unaware persons from knowing that a change has taken place.

Goffman sees activities that are "framed" as embedded in a surrounding environment; a physical, biological and social context (Goffman, 1974, 247). The rim of the frame is part of the internal activity and, at the same time, faces outward and is a part of the external world. The rim involves the "points at which the internal activity leaves off, and the external activity takes over" (Goffman, 1974, 219). When these points are "generalized by the individual", they are "taken into his framework of interpretation, thus becoming, recursively, an additional part of the frame" (Goffman, 1974, 249).

The use of Goffman's frame analysis cannot directly answer the question of whether or not cabals, illegitimate oligarchies, unfairly favored schools and methodologies are the central reality of annual meetings, but frame analysis may help in understanding why individuals are open and receptive to conspiracy theories concerning convention control, quite apart from or in addition to whatever authenticity those theories may have. More directly, Goffman's frame analysis aids in focusing upon a possible basis for individual stress in everyday activities at the convention. It can also set the stage for subsequent analysis of how discontinuous frames are managed in the convention world.

Two Contrasting Frames

The convention may be viewed in two quite different contexts which contrast each other in rather fundamental ways. These two are the "conventioning" frame and the "game" frame. In this section a description is presented of the untransformed "conventioning" frame which gives to the conventioners what is most often considered by them to be an authentic and appropriate reality.

The "game" frame is then described and discussed with reference to transformation through "keying".

The "Conventioneering" Frame

The primary framework, a social kind of frame or "guided doing" (Goffman, 1974, 23), involves the convention itself, and is labeled here the "conventioneering" frame. The main activities of the convention are governed by a set of rules regarding the organization of events and involvement in them, which, in this case, have particularly to do with conventioners' participation in the meetings. Activities include spending time in and around the convention in hallways, paper giving sessions, restaurants and bars, conversing in various sized groups, listening to or giving major addresses, running committee meetings, sitting on committees, seeking jobs or candidates for jobs, or talking to book publisher representatives.

The most generalized meaning that is conveyed or understood by the activities occurring in the "conventioneering" frame is that cooperative communication is taking place. All members, it is believed, participate in this communication, however different they may be from each other in position or status. The content of the communication fits neatly with the purposes of the disciplinary association, for scientific information is distributed by those knowledgeable to those interested. Ideas are exchanged, job possibilities are communicated, career gossip is traded, business is conducted. In the "conventioneering" frame, there are wide differences in knowledge and there is acceptance of a very steep prestige hierarchy. Prestige position is of great interest, and changes in status are closely watched. The system operates fairly smoothly because, for the participants, high status means disciplinary achievement, and disciplinary achievement rewards the individual scholar, the department, the school and the discipline as a whole. Status differences are particularly justified on the basis of scholarly merit.

Status differences become acceptable in the convention because basic to the "conventioning" frame is the belief that all members have a right to be heard and, in fact, will be heard and assessed, if they wish to be. This belief asserts a very democratic open access model which gives to everyone an equal opportunity to participate fully in the convention program (actually, in the affairs of the association generally), to organize paper sessions and speeches, to give papers, to be elected to committees and official positions as well as to help select officers and committee members, and to participate generally in making policy for the association. Of course, in each type of activity, the basis for judgment is disciplinary competence.

The convention takes place in a physical setting that is interpreted as being complementary to the encouragement of cooperative communication among the members. Conventions are usually held in concentrated spaces in one or a few large hotels. Fairly large numbers of conventioners are squeezed into limited spaces, but there is generally enough room, most of the time, to circulate easily and meet a large number of people. Hallways and corridors connecting rooms where paper giving sessions occur are viewed as opportunities for easy contact and communication with fellow participants. This is aided by having most of the paper giving sessions start and end at approximately the same time and by having two or three sessions each in the morning and afternoon, one following another, with short breaks in between. Small groups of members congregate, and cooperative communication takes place. These areas thus have physical qualities which seem to encourage contact among the members.

Another significant meaning of the "conventioning" frame is that the convention is viewed as a celebration of the discipline and a celebration

of individual achievement in the discipline, a time and place for bestowing and collecting rewards. So far, the convention has been viewed as a single strip of action framed by "conventioneering" messages. But, we may also look at any larger or smaller strip of action and examine its frame. The little clumps of people who congregate in the halls between paper sessions offer a primary example. It is possible to see the activity they are involved in as having meaning like or quite unlike that conveyed by the frame of the larger convention. In Goffman's analysis, the creation of groups would involve an encounter, with the need for individuals to present and maintain legitimate selves in the face of the highly problematic, volatile consequences inherent in the ordinary interactions of everyday life, or in seemingly simple encounters.³ Here the interest is in emphasizing the small group strips of action given meaning by the larger "conventioneering" frame. Within the group, status differences are often great, and status relationships need to be and are quickly established. This is experienced as appropriate again because of the belief that status comes from scholarly achievement primarily earned elsewhere, and that the small group, like the convention as a whole, celebrates achievement and rewards that achievement with deference and recognition.

The "conventioneering" frame is a social framework, and, thus, more subject to frame change and frame dissolution than a natural framework. Learned societies are vulnerable to a certain kind of keying in which the activity meaningful in the conventioneering frame is shifted to another type of social frame where similar activity has very different meaning for the participants.

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Much of Goffman's earlier work has emphasized facework, the process of coping with mistakes, embarrassments, flooding out, and so on, and this could provide a basis for transposing the activity in the small group frame to a considerably altered set of meanings (Goffman, 1959, 1961, 1963, 1971).

The keying process in this instance introduces, along with other factors, a strong element of ambiguity among the members. Convention participants are differentially aware of and differentially attentive to this second frame.

The "Game" Frame

The "conventioning" activity, with its conventioning reality, is keyed to another reality by the discovery that the same or similar activity in the convention is most meaningful when experienced as a game. The game is often ignored, overlooked, concealed or covertly recognized, but, nevertheless, for many, is a highly persuasive version of reality. It is also firmly embedded in the convention's external environment.

In the "game" frame, as opposed to the "conventioning" frame, individuals experience the convention as a game of legitimacy and status acquisition and maintenance, with the basic activity rules most apparent in the same face-to-face interaction involved in conventioning, but not restricted to them.

The object of the game for the participants is to raise and protect their individual statuses, primarily through using encounters with other convention participants. Three basis rules are more or less attended to by members of the convention who are playing the game:

1. Conventioneers must seek to have public and other encounters with persons of the same status, or, preferably, persons with higher status than themselves.
2. Participants should avoid encounters with persons of lower status than themselves.
3. Participants at the convention must actively prevent, leave or, change any circumstances which renders them isolated in public, that is, which places them publicly alone for any length of time. Visible public isolation is so negative a state that almost all players work very hard to avoid it. It should be noted, however,

that some persons are of such high status that the convention seems to need them more than they need the convention. Thus, being alone seems to enhance their status, not detract from it. They need not seek encounters, but must orchestrate them. Some high status participants cultivate "fans." For some there is no alternative with regard to lower status persons. If they are to relate to almost anyone, it will have to be someone of lower status.

These three rules fundamentally alter the character of the "conventioning" frame. If they are followed, conventioning activity is changed into something that looks like conventioning activity, but is not.

Several important assumptions seem to underlie the game. One is that in addition to the major and approved means for raising and maintaining prestige via publication and responsible association participation, it is possible to enhance status directly via face-to-face interaction and visible participation in the convention. Second, and equally important, is the belief that convention encounters give the individual participant clues concerning what his or her current status is, telling whether or not that status has risen, is being maintained, or is declining. Thus, the focus of the game is upon the centrality of those conventioning activities that involve fairly public encounters.

It is important to note, however, that not everyone plays the game, nor is everyone conscious that a game is going on. Many persons play the game with varying degrees of consciousness. Some persons experience the game frame but decide not to play, and, of course, there are a small number of persons who act always in terms of the "game" frame. In addition, the game is not played at all times and under all circumstances, and some conventions are more "game" oriented than others. But for the many who play seriously (consciously or not), the game is absorbing and sometimes anxiety producing. It illuminates for conventioners a complicated world of shifting realities that can be very interesting but difficult to manage.

Framing Strips of Convention Activity

Several kinds of focused situations seem to be common to annual meetings. These will be analyzed to demonstrate the differences between keying to a "game" frame or to a "conventioning" frame. Much of the activity in the convention looks the same in both frames, but the values, perils and opportunities of the "game" frame are very different from those of the "conventioning" frame.

Cocoon Building in the Halls

An important kind of encounter is that which takes place in the halls and corridors of the conventions, especially those connecting paper giving sessions, elevator entrances and hotel lobbies. These are among the most public places in the convention, and they are interpreted as places where persons can more or less accidentally meet and speak for a limited time; the encounters are often not difficult. When persons pass through these halls as they emerge from paper sessions, or as they wait between paper sessions and other parts of the program, they, as individuals, seek encounters with others. In "game" frame terms, they look for persons of the same or higher status. If they have a successful encounter, they form a group which is different from the individuals who are alone and from the total audience in the meeting area. Something

akin to a "cocoon" is manufactured in this encounter.⁴

The individual has become engaged in conversation. The conversation absorbs that person's attention, but he or she gives off some other qualities also. He or she feels engaged in the situation and not involved in a searching action. The individual has moved from isolation to legitimate professional participation in the convention. The cocoon can be increased in size. If one member has much status, and there is a good deal of traffic, frequent conversational interruptions will occur by passersby who seek to discover if they will be recognized, and sometimes, also, if they will be admitted to the group. There are often moments of awkwardness as status differences are straightened out inside the cocoon.

A significant characteristic of the hallway setting is that cocoons built there can be easily broken out of. Members are not trapped by being in a cocoon, but may, when they wish, move out of it and on to join another cocoon or form a new one. These fairly fleeting encounters are viewed as opportunities in the "game" frame because they firmly and publicly show the participants

4

The "cocoon" appears to be a type of what Goffman has called an "encounter" or "focused gathering" (Goffman, 1961, 17). As it is used here, "cocoon" indicates that the encounter has been produced by an organism, "spun" by an individual or individuals. The cocoon consists of a social "membrane" (see Goffman on membranes, 1961, 79) surrounding the group within it and marking it off from other individuals or groups in the same general convention space. The "cocoon" metaphor implies a kind of protection for its members from environmental hazards, although inside the "cocoon", the situation may not be quite so secure. The "cocoons" exhibit, to those observing, varying degrees of transparency. However, they are rarely if ever completely transparent or opaque. Thus, the translucent cocoon gives varying amounts of information concerning the activities and statuses of its inhabitants. In the case of conventions, the cocoon tends to establish for its members a kind of convention legitimacy and may even indicate the stage of development which an individual is in. Finally, the "cocoons" are normally broken out of as the individuals go on to other things, and may, in fact, mark the transition for some members from student to colleague, from famous scholar to barely remembered colleague, from local practitioner to national figure; in short, from one status stage to another. ("Cocoon" is the author's term and not Goffman's).

in a legitimate and highly approved convention activity. They are an opportunity because they provide the possibility for those of lesser status to be with and be seen with higher status members. It is viewed by high status persons as a chance to be publicly seen with other high status persons and to generally be with lower status members. Generosity in this case is easier than in many other situations because the group can and will be broken up in short order, and the high status person is not trapped with lower status persons for any length of time.

The cocoon building scene in the corridors can also be viewed somewhat negatively in terms of face work. Often the encounters are so unplanned, abrupt, and unmanageable that a large number of very visible social gaffes may be committed, gaffes of a magnitude that, within seconds, render everyone in the cocoon speechless. Old enemies meet embarrassingly, persistent job seekers come straight to the point, old grudges are renewed. Names of old and present colleagues and students are forgotten, misremembered and mispronounced. Inappropriate gossip slips out. Status differences are rendered highly problematic in some cocoons. As situations in which the individual seeks to discover his or her own status position, they can be extremely confusing and disappointing. Perhaps a general experience for a game player is that "No one at the convention ever receives a sufficient supply of recognition and deference." Corridor cocoons can thus turn from being easy encounters into irritating, difficult and embarrassing traps or into golden opportunities for different players.

Contrast this with the "conventioning" frame. All of the above activity occurs just as it does in the "game" frame. Cocoons are manufactured, and the halls invite easy, brief encounters. But the "game" aspects of the

encounters are virtually ignored or treated as negative, residual and unimportant. In the "conventioning" frame, cocoon building is viewed as good because it adds to cooperative communication, and if there are problems such as gaffes, embarrassment, hurt feelings and status striving, these are treated as peripheral, to be overcome by individual improvement through experience and growth, better organization and planning for the convention. These strips of action are viewed in the "conventioning" frame as meaningful activities for the members, but not as central. In the "game" frame, these activities are much more dominant, for from them come some of the possibilities for status enhancement or decline.

Of particular interest in "conventioning" frame terms is the extension of the presumption of egalitarianism which cuts across almost all activity in associations to the halls and corridor situated cocoons. Just as it is assumed that any member has a right to be heard at the convention, to be elected to office, and to give papers, if they are good ones, so it is presumed in the "conventioning" frame that any participant in the convention has an equal right and opportunity with any other member to join any cocoon that he or she wishes, or to spin a cocoon of one's own, a rule especially encouraged in the open atmosphere of the hallway encounters. These halls are meant to be open access places. If persons do not freely join hallway cocoons, the conventioning explanation attributes it to lack of interest in a particular group, the press of other business, or a search for some particular colleague or group. This assumption is especially true because egalitarian expectations place a premium on inclusive responses by high status participants toward low status members.

In the "game" frame, it is much more readily recognized that entry into a cocoon is not so easy and casual as all that. Status differences and lack

of previous acquaintance between those in the cocoon and those outside are likely to inhibit, for would be participants, a smooth transition from isolation to cocoon.

Thus, because they are presumably more open and less restricted than some other locations, the halls and corridors become sites where highly aggressive social behavior may very directly pay off and recognition rewards may be received. Forceful attending to the initiating of encounters is very helpful; those who participate do meet members, do get favorable feedback, and do bestow recognition on others.

The "game" frame provides focus for the reality that the cocoons are not really openly accessible, and that there are means for those already in the cocoon to reduce the possibilities of easy ingress, and to discourage a participant once inside the cocoon. For example, access is discouraged when the cocoon is organized into a tight circle with cocoon members' faces pointed inward, their backs facing any would be interloper. Some cocoons are formed in hallways around furniture, corners, walls, alcoves and stairways. These physical barriers are used to erect fortresses against easy access and to drastically restrict cocoon size and turnover. If a real cul de sac is required, it is possible to have a single cocoon member perform a simple, unobtrusive, but highly effective gate-keeping function. Some cocoons simply fall apart when they become too large, and, in a few instances, when a critical mass has been reached, cocoons will split into two or three cocoons with the probability that some cocoon members will suddenly find that they are isolates.

The Isolate in the Corridors

What is strikingly noticeable in the corridor action is the isolated individual, sitting, standing or slowly walking up and down the corridors

alone. Generally, this person is indicating, perhaps unknowingly, that he or she is in the game, but is not playing it well. It may also mean that he or she would like to play the game, but cannot do so. Some persons do not seem particularly affected by this kind of visibility and are content to be of the game but not in it. Others, who inadvertently find themselves in the position of isolates and discover there is no quick and reasonable way to get into the game, will offer various kinds of behavior intended to show that their predicament is only temporary. Indeed, if they think it is not temporary, they will leave, thus withdrawing from the game to play later, or shift to another turf where the chances of playing the game are better.

If they choose to stay and have difficulty in becoming enmeshed in a cocoon, isolate members may use a variety of gestures and postures to indicate that there is a perfectly legitimate reason for their being isolates in a public place, where pairing is required as a minimum standard for legitimacy. They look frequently at their watches, and glance hopefully toward the ends of the corridors. They do not dare enter a cocoon. They seem to know no one. They would have us believe they are waiting for someone who is late. Some persons make a great show of weariness and flop down in a chair to indicate that they have been so busy talking and being sought after that they cannot bear to get engaged in another cocoon building enterprise for the moment. A person may also sit down and make a considerable show of writing, presumably to capture something important that was said at his or her last encounter or paper session. Another way to deal with this isolation is to move rather quickly through the halls, going back and forth. But since this becomes embarrassingly noticeable after the fourth or fifth time, it is usually soon abandoned.

Some situations seem to indicate that not only do persons have a vague and undefined feeling that something isn't quite right, but the participants may be unaware that they are giving off information. One location which is unconsciously revealing is the message board. Messages with the names of those whom others have thought important enough to write notes to are pinned to a board or wall. People come to this message place and stare very intently at it for long periods of time before shaking their heads and moving disconsolately away. This behavior invites others to have considerable doubt that those to whom the messages are addressed ever look at these boards, or that those who look ever find any message. It is rather an activity that goes with isolation, and comes regularly after an isolate has wandered through a full cycle of possible places to go.

If the "conventioning" frame, in contrast, the isolate moving about the halls and lobbies of the hotels, and his or her activity, is taken at disciplinary face value. The individual is seen as moving quite appropriately from paper session to paper session, from paper session to lobby, to room, to lunch, to committee meetings and so on. The presumption is that this wandering member will at any moment join a cocoon, be hailed by a colleague, or arrive at an important association committee meeting.⁵

Dining in Cocoon

Lunch. There are some encounters in which the stakes in the game become much higher, where opportunity becomes much greater for the convention game

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For an analysis of how isolates manage their "stigma" in a different but highly similar context, see Berk's discussion of facesaving at the singles dance, (1977).

player, but where unmanageable social traps emerge with alarming abruptness and frequency. Lunch is just such a significant encounter.

In the "conventioning" frame, the clusters of persons seated at tables and booths in restaurants are viewed as continuing, outside the convention halls, the business of the convention, including cooperative communication about the discipline and the occupation. The luncheon cocoon provides an opportunity for more leisurely talk, solidifies personal and disciplinary bonds, and eases interactions. This is partially because the luncheon cocoon, once assembled, is likely to remain a single social entity for a fairly long, standard, understood length of time.

In the "game" frame, lunch holds the promise of very great status affirmation, even the opportunity for some status acquisition. However, it is likely to be viewed by a substantial number of conventioners as a major trap. It is a trap because once the lunch group is formed and participants are in a restaurant, they are almost certain to be stuck, for however long the luncheon takes, with that particular group of people. This is very important in the game, for going to lunch with lower status people is a highly visible undertaking, and it prevents members from joining a more desirable higher status luncheon cocoon. Lunches tend to be eaten in or close to the convention hotels, so that lunchers are maximally displayed with other lunchers. Generally, higher status people are wary of being trapped in, for them, a fruitless, uninteresting or status reducing lunch.

The lunch becomes an especially critical aspect of the game in relation to rule three of the game - that is, never be a publicly displayed isolate at the convention. Almost nothing makes a member more visibly alone, and presumably without status, than having lunch alone. People at conventions will do almost anything to avoid the stigma of this state. Thus, conventioners

will skip lunch, have meals brought to their rooms, go far away from the convention hotels to eat in places they think other conventioners will not go; they will even go to lunch with those of less status than themselves.

One result of the cruciality of the lunch trap is that much frantic activity occurs around the noon hour every day as persons seek same or higher status lunch companions. Much shuffling, stalling and indecision is apparent as participants try to wait until the last possible moment to join a luncheon cocoon, in case there may be a chance of latching on to a better cocoon at any moment or forming a higher status one oneself. Some of the ways of dealing with this have already been mentioned, but other strategies include prearranging meals with people (although this forecloses the possibility of finding a higher status cocoon), and making agreements with one's home institution colleagues to get together if it gets to be 1:00 p.m., allowing each to cocoon hunt on his own, but now with a hedge against total isolation.

The volatility of the pre-lunch encounter is partially determined by the openness of the hallways and corridors after paper giving sessions. Those fleeting encounters so easily entered into and broken up by the movement of members from paper session to paper session become highly tense encounters when the lunch hour approaches. Cocoons are still easy to enter, but they now need to be effectively screened and managed in order for a high status lunch group to not grow too large, and to prevent its high status quality from being attenuated by the presence of too many lower status persons joining it. Highly aggressive behavior appears as some persons actively seek to discourage and prevent other conventioners from entering into or staying in the high status cocoon bound for lunch. Cutoff gestures occur as one member steps

in front of a lesser status person to address a higher status person. Luncheon cocoon builders neglect to give specific lunch invitations. They make arrangements to meet at a specific restaurant at a specific time and fail to convey that information to everyone in the cocoon. Thus, the "game" frame gives a sharply contrasting meaning to reality from that of the "conventioning" frame in the luncheon strip of activity.

Dinner. The evening meal is almost as serious a cocoon as lunch. It is also important for the same reasons that lunch is, although the impact in terms of the "game" frame is somewhat attenuated in the convention as a whole.

The evening meal often includes such non-convention activities as seeing old non-academic friends and local relatives, being with non-conventioner wives and husbands, and attending any of a wide variety of non-convention entertainment possibilities - plays, concerts, parties, night clubs, and so on. In addition, dinner is much more likely than lunch to take place further from the convention site, thus reducing the opportunity for being seen and assessed by other conventioners.

For those who are continuing to play the game through the evening, the opportunities and traps are quite significant. Dinner cocoons may be especially burdensome because they may mean being with the same people for the entire evening. If dinner turns out to be a trap, the participant may have real difficulty breaking from the cocoon without it being viewed as premature. To reduce the problems surrounding the evening meal, some conventioners schedule a dinner, and then attend an evening convention speech or event. At such an event, dinner companions are immediately transformed into separate, more distant fellow spectators or they simply do not attend.

Breakfast. Breakfast tends not to operate so conspicuously or clearly as a location for extensive game playing, possibly because members emerge, mostly from separate hotel rooms at staggered times, and are not always ready to immediately start playing the status game. There are, of course, breakfast meetings and casual encounters. Because the three rules of the "game" frame are relaxed at breakfast, it is a good time for high status persons to be with lower status persons such as graduate students and former graduate students. Breakfast does not last long, and it is expected that not everyone has yet seriously started the day.

Sanctuaries

In addition to the opportunities and traps which various types of encounters provide, some encounters are characterized by their capacity to offer sanctuary from the fierce competitiveness of the status game. Sanctuaries in this circumstance are viewed as locations in which players can participate alone without great strain or the probability of great embarrassment. Sanctuaries protect persons and allow them to participate legitimately outside a cocoon.

Paper Sessions. One of the best examples of a sanctuary is a paper session. It is a safe place to be seen, and little or no competitive cocoon building need take place. Members sit placidly and listen or do not listen. Some facework is possible, but much of it is manageable. Conventioners can show by stance and facial expression their approval, high interest or contempt, and it is not disapproved. The paper session is a major sanctuary because it is a place where a convention participant can legitimately be alone. The isolated member is thus accepted completely as a part of the whole audience which makes up the paper session, but he or she need run few risks in it.

Some members do play at cocoon making here also. They sit with others, whisper, pass notes, and generally begin to form noticeable cocoons within the paper session context. But such behavior, if carried very far, is much disapproved of.

There is some risk to the participant if he or she elects to publicly ask a question of a paper giver, but the potential questioner has such command over whether or not to initiate such a reaction that it can hardly be seen as a major social pressure on the conventioner.

This kind of sanctuary tends to allow the proletariat of the association and other likely isolates the opportunity for legitimate participation with little cost to them. Without paper sessions, for some persons, the convention would consist of sitting alone and dining alone in a hotel full of total strangers, with no sense of participation in the meetings. There is some opportunity for seeking status in the situation because a member can sit next to a great scholar or one will come and sit next to the member. The conventioner will feel some pride that he or she chose the hottest topic if the room is full to overflowing, and the conventioner can gain some feeling of prestige if the room has many of the great person figures in it.

What is a sanctuary for some persons may not necessarily feel that way to others. Those giving papers, for example, may anticipate a directly negative reaction from a discussant, or hostile questions from the audience. Actually this rarely happens, but persons in giving papers will sometimes give elaborate disclaimers before and during their presentations, and spend much of their public time justifying methodology, for example, in anticipation of adverse criticism.

Attempts to modify the paper giving sessions and provide means for greater audience participation have been tried in a number of conventions.

Round table discussions, brown bag luncheon meetings, special interest groups, and regional cocoon building have all been introduced. All such attempts are very straightforwardly based on the traditional "conventioning" frame rules for organizing experience. They are viewed as increasing and easing cooperative communication. The vast difference in the meaning of the sanctuary experience between the "conventioning" frame and the "game" frame is perhaps nowhere more vividly demonstrated than in paper sessions. As opposed to the "conventioning" frame, the "game" frame implies no necessary disciplinary communication at all in the paper giving sessions. In the "game" frame, the paper session as sanctuary is important predominantly because it reduces the harsh competitiveness of the game for members, indicates who is in the audience (not what they may say), tells who is giving papers (not what is in the papers), and generally legitimates member participation in these conventions in a non-costly way.

The Hospitality Suite. The hospitality suite, which individual departments often organize for their alumni and friends, might be called a mixed sanctuary. In the "conventioning" frame, the hospitality suite is looked upon with some ambivalence. Positively, it can be viewed as an extension of cooperative communication, a location or situation bringing together conventioners in a very relaxed and informal setting, and an opportunity to celebrate one or more great figures in the field. On the other hand, it smacks of institutional self advertisement and self congratulation in the kind of aggrandizing way that "game" frames reveal about individual experience. In addition, the hospitality suite seems to encourage localistic identification much more than cosmopolitan, achievement recognition. And since it can hardly accommodate the whole convention membership, it violates rather openly the equal access value of the "conventioning" frame.

In the "game" frame, the hospitality suite has the potential for being a trap if visited at the wrong time. It may be a trap for hosts who must be nice to visitors, but who do not want to spend too much time on low status persons. Often, hospitality suites are run by graduate student hosts who welcome almost anybody visiting as having higher status, and who themselves may thus find something of a sanctuary in staying at the home school's hospitality rooms. This offers for students a way to participate very legitimately in the convention without running the risks of cocoon entering in the corridors.

In game terms, for some players, the collection of a number of cocktail hour invitations operates as another measure of their level of recognition and esteem among their peers in the discipline. The hospitality suite may, however, be a trap for visitors who expect a cocktail party, but find there are only a few low status hosts around. It becomes a participatory sanctuary for many when there is a cocktail party and enough people come at the appropriate time. When persons are crowded close together the noise becomes deafening. Some social and professional barriers are relaxed. Mistakes are not noticed so easily. It is possible to be alone at such an affair, while eliminating one's visibility as an isolate. The member need only stay close to a shouting conversation among five people to become instantly invisible as an isolate, even though the participant enters not at all into the conversations, and in fact, is not noticed.

The real problem of the cocktail hour comes with dinner decisions. Suddenly, the hospitality suite can look like a trap that a member cannot easily and smoothly manage, or a location where a conventioner can turn instantly into a highly visible isolate by failing to find satisfactory dinner partners.

Barriers have been lowered by the relatively free interaction of the cocktail party. Persons feel freer to attach themselves to higher status persons. Everyone is standing relatively close to everyone else. Leaving becomes conspicuous. Often a group of five or six persons will break out of the cocktail party, get their coats, and leave in an attempt to form an exclusive dinner cocoon. However, if they are an attractive cocoon in the process of solidifying, they tend to have a few relatively uncertain, uninvited persons trailing behind them. As the group leaves the room and heads for the elevator, there is considerable pressure for the trailers to drop off, and a great deal of pressure for the cocoon builders to extend invitations to the trailers.

Book Displays. Another situation which acts as a sanctuary is the room where books are displayed. Representatives from various publishing houses are on hand, and members, when not giving or hearing papers, working the corridors, and so on, can go to this place and look over books and other materials. This is a highly legitimate place to be, but spending a lot of time there is not a good idea. It works well as a sanctuary because the activity of going from booth to booth is a highly legitimate way to be an isolate. In the "conventioning" frame, a participant may be viewed as being someone who is going through the latest literature to find appropriate books for his or her courses, or is seen, as he or she converses with the book publisher's representative, as perhaps talking about his or her own work. In this setting it is easy to meet persons the member knows, and there are few traps involved. However, it generally carries little prestige. Like the paper session, nevertheless, this sanctuary allows persons to participate without loss of face and to be legitimately alone. Unlike the paper sessions, this sanctuary is limited in the number of times the member may retreat to it. Unless the display room is very large and complex, and therefore can be reworked repeatedly, to be seen there more than once or twice is to be seen as someone who is not seriously playing the game.

Discussion: Conflicting Frames and Conventioneer Stress

Two frames, "conventioneering" and "game," may be invoked or discovered by individuals who need to make sense of the everyday activities they experience at the annual meetings of learned societies. These two frames elicit very different answers to the question, "What is it that is going on here?" Essentially, the same activities are going on, but the "conventioneering" frame, the initially dominating one, is often keyed so that the "game" frame emerges as another significant reality, for at least some members of the association.

Problematic Frame Transformations

A major distinction in analyzing this transformation of the rules that organize the individual participant's experience is that there is a difference between "keying" and "fabrication". In keying, the transformation is known to everyone involved. There is no deception, and no one is left out of experiencing and seeing the change. With fabrication, some persons are in on the change, engineer it, and seek to fool others (whether benignly or not) who remain at least temporarily ignorant of the change.

Despite the realities of the "conventioneering" frame and the "game" frame, not everyone is aware of the "game" frame, and some members are more aware than others. If only some of the participants see the convention via the game frame and others do not, then questions quickly arise as to whether or not the "conventioneering" frame is deliberately fostered by some members in order to keep other members from discovering and perhaps benefiting from the knowledge of what is really going on at the convention (i.e., "game" frame reality). This raises again the question of cabals, conspiracies and undemocratic ruling oligarchies and how they may unfairly control the convention by withholding

important knowledge concerning what is really happening. Adding fuel to the oligarchy explanation is the argument that the "game" frame, by emphasizing competitive social interaction as a basis for status acquisition, effectively undercuts the plausibility of the association conventioning claim that status is earned solely by disciplinary accomplishment. This opens the possibility that a good many, possibly non-legitimate criteria may be used to bestow recognition and rewards at the meetings. This is not to say that the reality of the "game" frame and skilled manipulation of social relationships in it are sufficient to gain long term high status in the discipline. It is rather to indicate that what are assumed in everyday convention life to be strips of activity anchored securely and firmly on "conventioning" assumptions are in fact highly vulnerable to frame deterioration at the least and frame substitution or frame change at the most, alterations that have a continuing impact upon how members view convention purposes and processes and themselves at the meetings.

The frustration and uneasiness of some participants, mentioned earlier in the paper, might be seen as manifestations of the strain that results from the characteristics of the two frames and their relationship to each other. The two frames are discontinuous and incompatible. Keying does not take place just once. Instead, there is continuous "rekeying," a process that shifts the focus from one frame to the other for individual members of the learned society. Each frame is continually rekeyed to the other, then back again. This shifting sometimes occurs rapidly and unpredictably. Stress results also because the transformations are neither clearly nor cleanly made, and participants feel that something is going on that they do not quite understand. Frames are only dimly seen and vaguely understood. Finally, increasing awareness of frame differences may increase strain, for one frame is seen as more legitimate and desirable than the other, although successful conventioners must operate in both realities.

Self and the Two Frames

The disjuncture between the two frames is highlighted by the emergence of separate, quite different experiences of "self" in each frame. In the "conventioning" frame, there is little or no distance between self and performance. The conventioner is what he presents himself to be, i.e., the participant who wishes to have those assessing him see his performance as an authentic expression of who he is. In the "conventioning" frame this image of self is highly compatible with ideas concerning the sincerity, legitimacy and trust required to successfully and cooperatively communicate, to add to the discipline's knowledge base, and to bestow valuable rewards upon high achievers in the convention.

There are, on the other hand, moments in the "conventioning" frame when this close connection between self and performance is allowed to lapse, as when a jazz concert is organized and presented by a group of conventioners to other conventioners as an activity slightly apart from the rest of the convention programs, or when an evening of skits offered by conventioners lampoons various discipline superstars' behavior and looks. But these events are almost never interpreted by conventioners as expressions of serious, authentic conventioning behavior. Rather they might be better thought of as momentary relief, a chance to blow off steam, in a frame otherwise so unrelentingly sincere. Further, these activities may be among the very few encounters in the "conventioning" frame in which role distance can legitimately come out of the closet and be publicly displayed:

In contrast to the "conventioning" frame, the "game" frame evokes an entirely different image of self. The "game" frame has been analyzed in terms that are in opposition to those of the "conventioning" frame, and presents a reality in which individual participants see themselves as acting in a situation laden with competition. The self image that emerges in the "game" frame is that of an entrepreneurial, cutthroat buccaneer using social aggrandisement techniques and reducing cooperative communication to secondary importance, if not dismissing it entirely. This is highly offensive to many professional

scholars' images of themselves, so that when the "game" frame is invoked there emerges a strong internal pressure to incorporate a great deal of role distance into the conventioner's image of self. The incentive is to say, "That person scrambling in an unseen fashion, knocking fellow conventioners aside as he goes after a limited supply of paper presentation copies, is not the real me." Of course, there are some scholars who never see the convention as anything but a game and who therefore recognize the aggressive behavior as simply appropriate.

Almost all of those expressions which indicate that the convention is no good, that instead the scenery, the nightlife, the museums, the relatives, etc., are what draw the person to the convention, are undoubtedly consequences of having glimpsed the reality of the "game" frame. The revealed "game" leads for the most part immediately to attempts by conventioners to place distance between the driving, ruthless, competitor playing the game and the authentic, generous, communicating authentic self which individual conventioners would like to present publicly.

Perhaps most importantly, the two realities, conventioning and game, must be contended with serially if not always simultaneously. The two realities must therefore be confronted. Neither frame can be totally discounted for too long by any participant in a convention. The annual meetings framed as "conventioning" are anchored firmly in a wider environment that includes members' relations with journals and to institutions of higher education, various levels of government and other organizations. Rewards from the convention's recognized activities can be taken home and presented as evidence that the individual ought to be promoted, receive higher pay, or be awarded

tenure based on discipline achievement. If participants are engaged in gamelike activities, feel a strong sense that they need distance from their role performance (with attendant ironic and perhaps playful self-mockeries) and do not feel like authentic selves producing serious achievement, then conventions would likely be viewed as not very worthwhile, jeopardizing the raison d'être of the whole association. It would certainly threaten the practice of bringing rewards considered legitimate back to the home institution. In fact, however, there is a great deal to the authenticity of the "conventioning" frame, so that it is continually rekeyed.

In the case of the "game" frame, too, meaning is tied very directly to larger, real, compatible frames, and the rim of the frame indicates the strength of the attachment of the game experience to its larger environment. The rim of the "game" frame also faces institutions of higher education which are declining in terms of the numbers of dollars and resources which they can command, while preparing more disciplinary scholars than can satisfactorily be employed. This puts much pressure upon individual schools to compete with each other for status via their faculties' activities for national prominence. High pressure to bring back recognition to the home schools may encourage conventioners to go beyond the traditional "conventioning" means of acquiring status and to seek it through the aggressive entrepreneurial face-to-face encounters of the "game" frame.

Frames and Historical Explanations of Dramaturgy

To see from another perspective the wider framework in which the two frames are embedded, two commentaries on Goffman's dramaturgical approach to everyday life are especially enlightening. Alvin Gouldner in The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology (1970) writes that Goffman's dramaturgical orientation catches precisely a change in personal interaction in the society as a whole and in organizations in particular. "The dramaturgical model reflects the new world, in which a stratum of the middle class no longer believes that hard work is useful or that success depends upon diligent application. In this new world there is a keen sense of the irrationality of the relationship between individual achievement and the magnitude of reward, between actual contribution and social reputation (381)... (dramaturgy) believes in the usefulness of sheer appearances (383)... the middle class now lives in a world in which conventional conceptions of utility and morality are less and less viable; in which rewards often seem to bear little relation to men's (or things') usefulness or morality; in which men can get ahead without the conventional talents or skills necessary in the old production-centered middle-class economy" (389). The organization of experience in the "conventioning" frame is analogous to the reality experienced by Gouldner's traditional middle class. That is in the "conventioning" frame, as in the conventional middle class world, competence, effort and achievement are to be rewarded. The "game" frame, on the other hand, has correspondence with the new experience of the middle class, where reality presents the possibility of rewards being distributed on the basis of acceptable appearances of competence. As Gouldner puts it,

"A man's value in this world, then, depends upon his appearances and not, as it had to the classical bourgeois, on his talents, abilities, or achievements" (380).

To explain the shift from old to new middle class experiences of reality, Gouldner asserts that individuals generally are victims of large scale organizations which they are powerless to change. In such circumstances, he feels, the impulse is toward impression management as the paramount means for competitive participants to enhance their individual statuses and power (382). As a substitute for changing the monolithic, impervious organizations, individuals focus upon appearances, their own and others (382).

By comparing older interaction meaning with the interaction meaning that Goffman concentrates on, Gouldner would give an historical dimension to frame analysis and, in effect, would explain frame change in conventions as being a result of large, fundamental shifts in societal values and reality perceptions. In everyday convention life, one would have to see a general trend from operating on the roles that organize meaning in the "conventioning" frame to more interaction conducted according to the rules of the "game" frame.

Randal Collins and Michael Makowsky in The Discovery of Society (1978) also see a change in the middle class experience of reality. They find more indeterminacy and flexibility involved in interaction settings. However, they see Goffman's approach as not taking this change sufficiently into account. For them, Goffman places too much emphasis upon the constraints and courtesies of middle class politeness. They believe that today's middle classes experience their worlds as characterized by great informality and frankness. For them, then, Goffman's perspective is outdated (235).

Such views are clearly compatible with Gouldner's, for Collins and Makowsky, too, see dramaturgy as resonating a shift in middle class reality experiences. However, they would come to two very different interpretations of the consequences of interaction in what are essentially two separate frames. For Gouldner, today's emphasis upon appearances is cynical and amoral, and in his writing there is an ambiguous but nevertheless strong regret at the loss of old middle class sensibilities. For Collins and Makowsky, on the other hand, current middle class participants are "tougher than Goffman supposes, capable of more honesty and willing at times to put up with an ambiguous and freer reality" (235). Also, increasing knowledge of one's own capabilities in defining reality for himself and others, they feel, will have a "potentially liberating effect" upon persons (235). In other words, for them, the "game" frame would be less constrained, freer reality which potentially enhances individual autonomy and creativity.

Thus, Gouldner thinks that Goffman's approach is highly reflective of a dramatic shift in middle class interpretations of reality and values, but he doesn't like what is involved in the shift, i.e., cynicism and amorality. Collins and Makowsky think Goffman's approach points in the right direction, but that he places too much emphasis on the constraining and motivating power of old bourgeoisie sensibilities.

In terms of this paper, the notion of a major shift from one frame to another as a large scale one direction movement seems too grand and ponderous for what has actually been observed in conventions. Instead, the frames have been presented here as highly volatile, shifting back and forth often and quickly. If, however, their interpretation were taken to mean that from year to year more and more persons were confronting

"game" reality and an increasing amount of time in the convention were experienced that way, then the historical interpretation takes on a far greater salience in the convention context. There could still be rapid frame shifts, but the proportion of time and people in each of the different frames may be gradually moving from "conventioning" to "game" frame reality.

In relation to the two perspectives which these commentators present (Gouldner's reluctant and ambiguous defense of old middle class values, and Collins' and Makowsky's optimistic, positive evaluation of new middle class reality), one can speculate on the future relationship of the "conventioning" frame to the "game" frame. These frames have been presented as highly discontinuous, but it may be that while old "conventioning" values and perceptions are eroding, some sets of rules must be maintained if the meetings are to make sense to the participants. Out of the gradual diminishing of conventioning experience and with the increase of game realities, a new set of convention interaction rules may be forming. In the long run, the two frames may become less discontinuous and not so incompatible, and a new "frame" emerge.

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